

# Virginia Family Engagement Model

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“Connecting kids and families for life.”



# Family Engagement

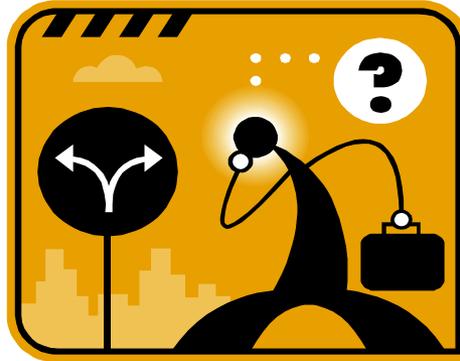
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A key building block of the Children's Services System Transformation that identifies a structured and deliberate approach to partnering with families. Family engagement recognizes that:

- ❑ All families have strengths;
- ❑ Families are the experts on themselves;
- ❑ Families deserve to be treated with dignity and respect;
- ❑ Families can make well-informed decisions about keeping their children safe when supported;
- ❑ Outcomes improve when families are involved in decision-making; and
- ❑ A team is often more capable of creative and high-quality decision-making than an individual.

# How Did We Get Here?

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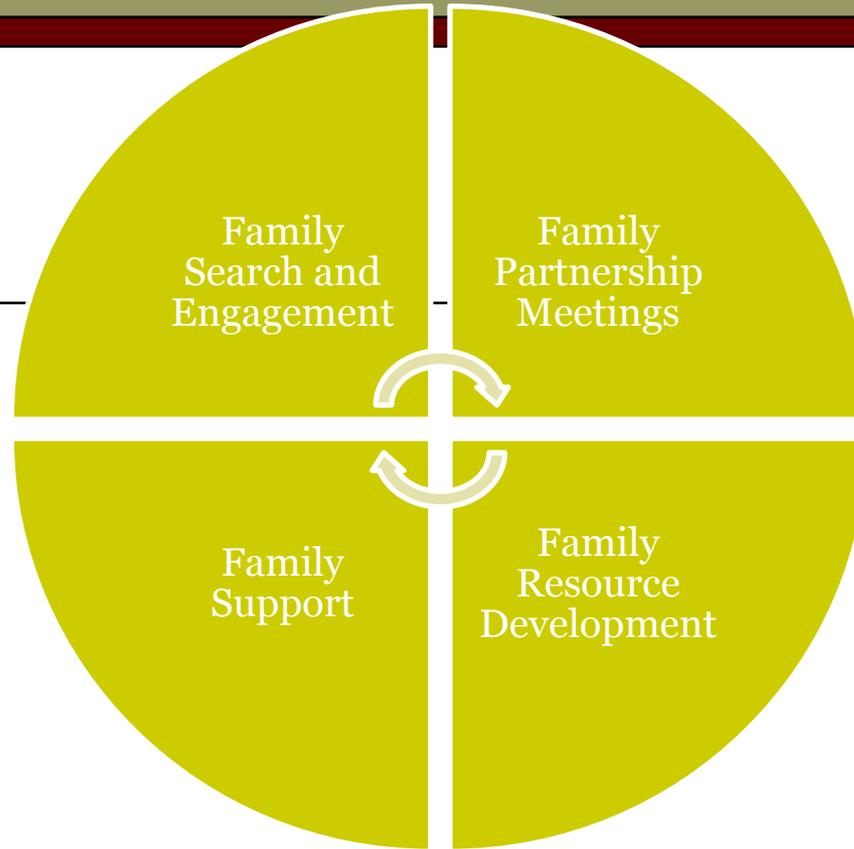
- Child and Family Services Review
- Survey of current practice
- Recommendations from CORE



# Current practices related to family engagement

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- A 2009 survey of foster care, adoption, and CPS supervisors found that 48% of local departments across the state are incorporating family engagement into casework practice
- The survey revealed inconsistent practice related to engaging families with meetings occurring at different points throughout the family's involvement with the agency
- The results of both the 2009 and 2003 Child and Family Services Review found that Virginia is not adequately involving children and families in the case planning process



## **The Continuum of Family Engagement**

Four components...



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## **Family Search and Engagement**

Supports early and ongoing identification and location of family members and others who can have a role in helping children and youth develop and maintain permanent connections.

# FAMILY PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

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A deliberate and structured approach to involving youth and families in decision-making through a facilitated meeting of family, their identified supports, and professionals working with the family.



# Family Partnership Meetings

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- Purpose -A team collaboratively develops ideas and establishes a decision for the child or family throughout the family's involvement with the agency
- Structure- A meeting facilitated by a trained individual that is not the social worker for the child or family



## Critical Decision Points: When Should Family Partnership Meetings Occur?

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- ❑ High or Very High Risk Assessment
- ❑ Emergency or Considered Removal
- ❑ Prior to Change of Placement
- ❑ Prior to Change of Goal
- ❑ At the request of the parent, foster parent, or social worker, if connected to one of the other decision points



# Facilitator Options

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- Full-time agency facilitator, that does not carry a caseload
- Part-time agency facilitator, with supervisory or case management responsibilities
- Contracted position
- Regional facilitator with locally pooled resources to share a staff person



# What is the role of the facilitator?

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- Focus the group on an identified task
- Move the group through the problem solving decision-making process
- Strive to develop a consensus with all participants, but always with agency staff in attendance



# Who attends the meeting?

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- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Child, if age appropriate
- ❑ Relatives
- ❑ Friends or relevant supports identified by the family
- ❑ Caregivers for the child
- ❑ Professionals involved with the family
- ❑ Relevant community partners

# How do we incorporate this model into our current family engagement practices?

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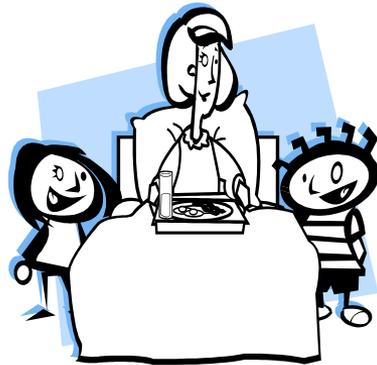
Assess and identify current practice to determine fit with critical decision points

Expand current practice to include other decision points



## **FAMILY SUPPORTS**

Providing families, youth, and resource parents with the services and supports to maintain successful and stable connections.



# FAMILY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing, recruiting, and supporting resource families which include kinship parents, informal kin, foster and adoptive parents.



# Family engagement requires...

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- A shift in the belief that agencies alone know what is best for children and families
- Allowing the family to fully participate in decision-making
- Using straight talk to communicate with others

# Family engagement is not...

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- ❑ A service/treatment planning meeting where services have been pre-determined
- ❑ Minimizing valid concerns for safety
- ❑ An additional CPS investigation or foster care hearing



## Strategies for Engaging Youth and Families

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- ❑ **Advocate for youth and families to be involved in the decision-making process from the very beginning (before its too late for them to be a part of meaningful change).**
- ❑ **Create a safe environment.**
- ❑ **Listen... really listen to what youth and families are saying and be willing to assist other participants in hearing and learning from them.**
- ❑ **Provide youth and families with the information and support they need to succeed at the decision making table.**



# How do we begin?

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As an agency, ask yourself the hard questions...

- ❑ How are families involved in case planning?
- ❑ Are we involving all families?
- ❑ Are we doing the best we can for children and families?
- ❑ How are we communicating with our community partners?



## What is the expectation for implementation?

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The plan is to provide training in three phases so all localities receive training during 2010.

With training and TA provided, the expectation is that by December 31, 2010 each locality will have family partnership meetings in at least one of the critical decision points.

# Family Engagement in CSA

- Engaging family members & youth has always been an emphasis in CSA statute, but less so in practice
  - Statute is more explicit about multi-agency participation in FAPT → family member & youth participation too often overlooked
- Transformation is leading DSS & CSA in the same direction
  - Family Partnership Meetings (FPM) employ practices that FAPTs can & should be using as well
  - Shared practice model must be the foundation for improvement across all child-serving agencies
- Going our separate ways is not an option
  - Collaboration is good practice, and it's the law
  - We'll go down this path together, or we'll fail separately

# Family Engagement and CSA

- SEC has directed us to take a closer look at how to promote family engagement practices in the CSA process by addressing
  - Policy/administrative barriers that could be removed or streamlined
  - Resources & supports that could help localities build capacity & manage change
- Workgroup formed and addressed family engagement in CSA across three levels:
  - State leadership & statewide support for localities
  - CPMT policies that engage & empower families, and promote their participation in decision making & service planning
  - Practices and behaviors that FAPTs can adopt that have been shown to engage families and promote real collaboration



# What is the impact for CPMT?

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- Development of policies regarding how FAPT and family engagement will integrate on a local level
- Ongoing assessment of current FAPT process to identify how it supports family engagement
- Possible increase in the requests for community based services



# Strategies for moving forward

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- State Executive Council(SEC) has approved policy that supports family engagement
- Localities may use CSA pool funds for facilitation if a child is CSA eligible and payment is a unit cost per session
- Technical assistance from the Office of Comprehensive Services



# Benefits of Family Engagement

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- ❑ Shared decision-making
- ❑ Family more likely to comply with a plan they helped to develop
- ❑ Prevent kids from coming into foster care
- ❑ More relative and community placements

# For Additional Information

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Visit [vafamilyconnections.com](http://vafamilyconnections.com) or contact

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